

Message

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Sent: 1/9/2017 4:03:15 PM
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Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips
 US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs
 January 9, 2017

Northwest Indiana Times: East Chicago residents want water filters
 (Pilsen) Water Online: In Chicago, Cleanup Of Lead-Polluted Yards Finally Begins

East Chicago residents want water filters
 Northwest Indiana Times, Lauren Cross
 January 7, 2017

EAST CHICAGO — Weeks after learning 18 of 43 homes tested by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in the USS Lead Superfund site produced high lead levels in the water, residents say they are not willing to take the city at its word that the drinking water is safe.

Residents during a community meeting Saturday insisted they push the city and the EPA for water filters and bottled water for all residents living on toxic soil until the extent of contamination in aging lead service lines can be researched.

East Chicago Councilwoman Christine Vasquez, D-4th, was one of two council members in attendance Saturday. She said East Chicago's water complies with EPA standards, and the lead likely came from services just outside or even inside homes, not from the city's water mains.

"(The city says) our water is clean in East Chicago. We have areas that are affected by this, of course, but we don't want to instill the fear in all the residents that you can't drink the water, you can't cook with the water, you can't bathe," Vasquez said.

She suggested residents take precautionary measures, such as installing a water filter and running cold water for several minutes before showering.

But Citizen Name / Ex. 6 said the EPA advised her mother, whose drinking water produced elevated levels during recent testing, not to brush her teeth in the bathroom.

"It's one thing that city officials are saying that the water is safe but if EPA is telling you can't do anything with that water, how safe can it be?" Jurado said, noting EPA provided her mother with a water filter for the kitchen faucet.

Similar concerns were raised Saturday by residents living elsewhere in East Chicago, which, like many older cities, are grappling with aging lead service lines.

EPA conducted the testing last year as part of a pilot program as the agency cleaned properties in the middle and eastern parts of the Calumet neighborhood where high levels of lead and arsenic contaminants were found in the soil.

The EPA used a type "sequential testing," where water is tested at various points along the city's water pipeline to determine whether digging may cause lead particles from old pipes to enter the water supply. The city nor the EPA plans to conduct further such water testing, officials have said.

About 1,000 homes are in the Superfund site, designated in 2009 by the EPA, including rental units in the public West Calumet Housing Complex. The complex was built in the early 1970s on the footprint of a lead smelter operation, whereas many of the homes in the eastern portion of the Superfund site were built before 1939.

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management advised the city back in September to change its corrosion control blend to further prevent lead from leaching into the into customer service lines, according to documents regarding the city's August petition to increase its water rates with the Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor.

Citizen Name / Ex. 6 one of the attorneys at Northwestern University Pritzker Law School's Environmental Law Clinic working on behalf of residents, told residents Saturday to keep pressure on the city to use appropriate anti-corrosive treatment and to ensure the treatment's effectiveness is routinely tested.

Citizen Name / Ex. 6 said she is researching options for further water testing in the Superfund site.

Lake County Councilwoman Christine Cid, D-East Chicago, also attended Saturday's meeting. She offered to help residents with bottle water drive, saying they shouldn't wait for local, state or federal officials to do so.

Other issues raised Saturday include lowered home values in the Superfund site and ensuring children with lead poisoning receive medical treatment.